

January 24, 2022

Dear Council President Albornoz, Council Vice President Glass, and Councilmember Rice:

The African American Health Program supports Montgomery County Council's Bill 1-22, Eating and Drinking Establishments – Healthy Meals for Children.

Children develop eating patterns early in life. Children with poor diets are prone to developing long-term health problems (e.g., obesity, type 2 diabetes, cancer, heart diseases, etc.) later in life. This is a concern since Blacks experience high incidence rates and poor health outcomes for many common chronic health conditions than whites and other populations. In addition, according to the CDC, children, who do not consume a healthy diet on a regular basis, have a prevalence for higher rates of absenteeism, tardiness and low grades. According to a study published in the Journal of the American Medical Association, "67% of calories consumed by children and adolescents in 2018 came from ultra-processed foods (e.g., pizza, fries, deli meats, cakes, etc.), a jump from 61% in 1999".

When children consume highly processed foods, saturated fats and added sugar on a regular basis, this can lead to many negative health effects. Proper diet and nutrition help our children live a healthy life, avoid obesity and chronic diseases and help to improve a child's learning potential, as well as academic performance. Foods that help prevent disease appear to also help with weight control. An excellent way to ensure that a child can eat healthier is by having healthy meal options, which can have a positive impact on a child's healthy growth and development into adulthood.

We urge the Montgomery County Council to approve Bill 1-22 which will help children, especially Black children, have a healthy start to their life with proper nutrition.

Sincerely,

The African American Health Program-Executive Committee